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President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 160 (*continued*)

Global road safety crisis

Draft resolution (A/58/L.60/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the plenary meeting this morning is held in connection with World Health Day and the launching of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, pursuant to resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003.

Day after day, sombre accounts of death and serious injury resulting from road traffic accidents are reported in countries around the world. Each year, road traffic accidents account for more than 1 million deaths and injure or disable between 20 and 50 million people. A growing crisis such as this, which affects all States Members of the United Nations, now has its proper place on the international agenda. This plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the global road safety crisis provides us with an opportunity to examine the multifaceted issues concerning road safety and, importantly, to focus on the development of effective strategies to address it.

When global road safety was first taken up at its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly noted the rapid increase in road traffic deaths globally and its impact on national economies, especially in developing countries. Since then, the United Nations has taken steps to bring this matter to the forefront for consideration and action. It is an initiative carried out with the cooperation of the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and other United Nations agencies.

World Health Day, which we celebrated just one week ago, for example, was dedicated to road safety. The theme for the Day, "Road safety is no accident", underscored that road traffic tragedies are indeed avoidable. The recently launched *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, co-produced by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, sets out in detail the core issues surrounding road accidents, including their global impact, risk factors involved and ways to address them.

It is evident that, if trends in the global road traffic crisis continue, it could become a major global health crisis, with significant economic and social consequences. The statistics available to us allow us to make a balanced assessment of the situation as it now stands and of the path it is likely to take in the future if we do not intervene in a decisive and urgent way.

The statistics are startling. According to WHO and World Bank estimates, the global economic costs of road accidents and the injuries that result amount to some $518 billion. Developing countries account for

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some $65 billion of this amount, which is more than they receive in official development assistance.

A majority of motor vehicles are operated in the developed world and it might be expected that a majority of fatalities would occur in the developed world. The statistics, however, paint quite a different picture. Low- and middle-income countries account for about 85 per cent of deaths and a disproportionately high percentage of disability globally.

Around the world, road injuries are among the leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 44, who are in their most productive years. In 2000, road traffic accidents ranked as the ninth leading cause of mortality and morbidity, accounting for 2.8 per cent of all global deaths and disability. Projections of the WHO suggest that if these trends continue, by 2020, road traffic injuries could rank third among causes of disease or injury, ahead of such other health problems as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The social costs are incalculable. The loss of breadwinners and the long-term care of people disabled in road traffic accidents drive many families into poverty or further into poverty, particularly in the developing world. From this perspective, the potential consequences for sustainable development are clear.

This meeting, therefore, must be a catalyst for our further action and for strengthening international cooperation.

The General Assembly continues to raise awareness among Member States of the need to critically examine the national and international public policy dimensions of global road safety. Our initiatives in this regard must re-emphasize the setting of strict international standards, worldwide cooperation and, in the case of developing countries, capacity-building to implement those standards to the highest level. Addressing the broader issues of accident prevention, including in the development of infrastructure that takes into account both people and vehicles, also merits urgent consideration.

The international community as a whole has been encouraged to be a part of that process: Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. We are asked to make youth in particular the target of our initiatives. I consider the Stakeholder Forum on global road safety that is to take place tomorrow to be a timely initiative, and would like to encourage participation.

The success of some countries in sharply reducing crashes and injuries underscores that accidents and casualties can be prevented. What this shows us is that we can reduce the risk of death and injury if we take a systematic approach to understanding how people, vehicles and the environment interrelate. It also requires a broad approach encompassing areas including emergency health services, education for prevention, legislation and law enforcement.

I believe that Member States are in agreement that we must do more to address the issue of road traffic safety and make it a focus of attention of the United Nations system. Important courses of action have been proposed in the joint World Health Organization-World Bank report. Governments and United Nations agencies need to take more action in this area. We also need to encourage civil society and the private sector to become our partners in these initiatives. We have proposed that the global road safety crisis be viewed from the broadest perspective, from health to law enforcement. Necessary resources should be mobilized to assist developing countries to improve road safety, consistent with the gravity and urgency of the road traffic problems they face.

I believe we are now poised to make a difference, to reduce risk and to save lives. We must take decisive action, and we must take it now.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Fréchette.

The Deputy Secretary-General: This meeting of the General Assembly brings much needed attention to a global crisis that exists right in front of our eyes yet that, with some noble exceptions, has until now been strangely off the radar screen of public policy. 1.2 million men, women and children are killed in traffic accidents every year. Surely, that should be enough to make road safety a leading issue in global public health.

As with so many other public health problems, the poor suffer disproportionately. More than 80 per cent of those 1.2 million deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. And in those countries, those most at risk of being injured or killed in a crash are

pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and people who use informal means of public transport.

The human consequences of road crashes are frequently devastating. Survivors and their families must cope with the painful and often long-term consequences of injury, disability and rehabilitation. The cost of care and the loss of a primary breadwinner can drive a family into poverty.

The economic costs are also enormous. Road traffic injuries cost most countries between 1 and 2 per cent of their gross national product: a total of more than $500 billion every year. The cost in the low- and middle-income countries exceeds the amount they receive in development assistance.

It need not be so. People hold a fatalistic view of road crashes, often encouraged by the use of the word "accident" instead of "crash" or "collision". Yet, many of the risks involved are entirely within our control. Many crashes can be prevented, while the effects of many others can be reduced. We have a lot to do to raise awareness. We must ensure that hard-earned gains in public health and development are not undermined by those preventable deaths and injuries.

Yes, we have a lot of work to do. But we know what works, and we have the knowledge at hand to make the necessary changes. This is a multisectoral problem, falling not just within the domain of ministries of transport. Ministries of health, finance, environment, education, justice, police and others all have to work with the transport sector to improve road safety.

We can take heart in the widespread enthusiasm shown by so many organizations and experts throughout the world, teaching and learning about road safety and taking the initiative to make roads safer. The United Nations family, including the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and others, will continue to play its role.

I call upon Member States and civil society to take concerted action on key issues such as wider dissemination of safety devices, improved design of roads and vehicles and firmer action against speeding and those who drive while their reactions are impaired by alcohol or drugs.

I also call upon the donor community to make additional investment in this area. Current support for road safety in developing countries is insufficient. Such contributions would be cost-effective. Even more important, they would save lives.

Road safety is no accident, as has been said. It requires commitment at the highest levels of leadership. The less we do about it, the more lives will be shattered. I urge the Assembly to adopt a resolution that reflects our unanimous will to improve global road safety. Let us remind ourselves and one another that, working together, we can save lives.

The Acting President: After consultations and with the permission of Member States, I now give the floor to the Director-General of the World Health Organization, in accordance with resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003.

Mr. Lee (World Health Organization): The first person to be killed by a car was Bridget Driscoll of the United Kingdom. She was 44 years old and a mother of two. She was knocked down at London's Crystal Palace on 17 August 1896. The car was travelling at 12 kilometres per hour. She never knew what hit her. The British coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death. Speaking at the inquest, he warned: "This must never happen again".

Twenty years ago, Michel Zeller was driving to work when his car collided with a truck. He was not killed, but he was in a coma for six months. He attended our World Health Day celebration last week in Geneva, in a wheelchair, as his injuries have left him paralyzed for life. His wife spoke on his behalf, because he has lost the use of his voice. She herself found it very difficult to speak, not because of any injury but because of the trauma of recalling what had happened. Her message was that this must never happen to anyone again. On behalf of her family and the millions of others who are afflicted in the same way every year, I bring the same message to the Assembly today.

I thank the Government of Oman for taking the lead in bringing this topic to the General Assembly today.

The deaths, injuries and economic losses caused by road accidents can be prevented. The *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, which we launched last week in Paris, set out the known risk factors and the prevention measures that are known to be effective. Some of these are to set and enforce laws on seat belts,

child restraints, helmets and drinking and driving, to promote daytime running lights and to improve visibility for all road users. In addition to setting laws and raising awareness, countries need to create policies that promote safer vehicles, safer traffic management and safer road design. The countries that have been most successful in improving safety have been those that have engaged many different groups from Government, civil society and industry in a coordinated road safety programme. Every sector, especially the transport, education, health and law enforcement sectors, has a role to play in tackling the problem.

The public needs to increase its contribution by strengthening emergency services for victims, improving data collection, contributing to policy-making and promoting prevention activities. International agencies, the donor community and non-governmental organizations all have an important role to play in promoting road safety. Each one of us, whether as pedestrians, as drivers or as decision-makers, can contribute to this effort. Road safety is no accident. Traffic injuries decrease wherever people recognize that they can be prevented and act accordingly. Let us all decide here and now to give road safety the priority it deserves.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of Oman, to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his valuable report on the global road safety crisis (A/58/228). The report represents a qualitative breakthrough in our deliberations on this humanitarian crisis, which affects the lives of individuals and communities throughout the world. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the World Health Organization, for his thorough overview of the major themes of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*.

We congratulate the World Health Organization and the World Bank on the issuance of that important document, with the contributions of more than 100 experts representing all continents and many different sectors. We also wish to commend the friendly Government of France for hosting a conference in Paris on 7 April 2004, which highlighted the consequences of road traffic accidents and means of prevention.

Throughout the history of mankind the individual has been at the centre of development. The success of any development plan depends, to a great extent, on meeting human needs. There may be obstacles that stand in the way of enjoying the fruits of development. However, solutions must be sought. Road traffic accidents and injuries are a major issue and a public health problem of great concern to individuals, families and communities.

On the social front, statistics indicate that nearly 3,000 people perish each day due to road traffic accidents, resulting in more than 1 million deaths every year. Moreover, 20 million to 50 million persons are injured every year, some sustaining life-long disabilities. Studies indicate that if appropriate action is not urgently taken to remedy this problem, it is likely that road traffic injuries could become the third largest cause of death in developing countries by 2020.

On the economic front, road traffic injuries have negative consequences for the economies of the world. Statistics show that roughly $518 billion is spent annually on road traffic injuries, injuries that affect the most productive groups. The least developed and other developing countries account for about 85 per cent of these accidents, which in turn further burdens their already overburdened economies. Aware of this unfolding crisis, we believe that no effort should be spared in enhancing and supporting programmes aimed at improving safety for all road users and sparing them the scourge of this humanitarian crisis.

Allow me, in this context, to point to the steps implemented by my Government at the national level since 1997. They include, inter alia, the enactment of legislation, the establishment of a national road safety agency, updating comprehensive regulations to meet the needs of the injured and their rehabilitation and the creation of a registry to obtain detailed information on the consequences of injuries, with the aim of minimizing the crisis and with the ultimate goal of creating for our citizens an environment that is conducive to achieving further social and economic development.

We believe that our deliberations on road safety should go beyond the ceremonial, and that serious and immediate steps should be taken at the national, regional and global levels. This requires strong

political will and concerted, sustained efforts across a broad range of sectors, from road users to Governments and car manufacturers, as well as regional and international organizations, which must work together to identify sound measures and criteria to counter this unfolding crisis.

Oman's initiative to raise global awareness about road safety, through General Assembly resolution 58/9, which called, inter alia, for a worldwide effort to raise awareness of the road safety crisis and its consequences, was based on that premise. The resolution also emphasized the need to put in place mechanisms to improve safety for road users through reducing the negative impact of road accidents.

In that context, I am pleased to present draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, on which my Government held numerous consultations with other Member States to arrive at a consensus reflecting the ambitions of our countries and the expectations of our peoples. The draft resolution builds on the practical recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report and in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* of the World Health Organization and the World Bank. The main points of the draft resolution before the Assembly, which we hope will be adopted without a vote, are as follows.

First, it invites the World Health Organization, working in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to act as a coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system.

Secondly, it requests the Secretary-General, in submitting his report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, in accordance with resolution 58/9, to draw upon the expertise of the United Nations regional commissions, as well as the World Health Organization and the World Bank, on road safety.

Thirdly, it underlines the need for further strengthening international cooperation, taking into account the needs of developing countries by enhancing their financial and institutional capacities, to deal with issues of road safety.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Pakistan, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, the Sudan, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zambia.

The responsibilities and challenges ahead are great and require strong political will within the framework of effective global participation between member States, regional and international organizations and civil society. That partnership should include initiatives, programmes and the exchange of expertise on road safety issues, in addition to the promulgation of legislation at a level commensurate with our goals and aspirations to reduce road traffic injuries for succeeding generations.

In conclusion, we are facing a critical crisis and further cooperation is crucial through the active involvement of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and civil society for a safer and more stable environment for all people.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Transport of Ireland, Mr. Seamus Brennan, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Brennan (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Furthermore, the following countries also align themselves with this statement: the 10 acceding countries which will become members of the European Union at a special ceremony in Dublin on 1 May 2004 — Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association countries, Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area.

Today's debate comes at the end of a week in which we have all been asked by the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) to place a particular emphasis on road safety. Traffic collisions are at epidemic levels in many States and there seems to be widespread acceptance that they are an inevitable consequence of ever-increasing mobility. That view

feeds on and encourages the type of behaviour that creates the environment that gives rise to such collisions in the first place. Challenging that behaviour and the premise on which it is based requires the advocacy of champions. Bringing the subject of road safety to this plenary today reflects the vision and commitment of Minister Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla of Oman that societies around the world must address both the causes and the results of traffic collisions.

Against the background — as we have heard already today — of 1.2 million deaths and 50 million injuries on our roads, the launch in Paris last week of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* by the World Health Organization and the World Bank presents a timely commentary on road safety in its broadest sense. The *report* presents an overview of road safety on a global basis, emphasizing the scope of the problem and discussing policies aimed at the prevention of collisions and the reduction of their effects.

The consequences of our acceptance of the inevitability of traffic collisions have been clearly established in very stark terms by the WHO. Failure to act could see injuries from road traffic placed as the third highest contributor to the global burden of disease and injury by 2020.

However, many societies and Governments have chosen to face this challenge. Indeed, mentalities, I believe, are changing as regards road safety. Road accident fatalities are no longer accepted as an inevitable corollary of increased mobility. On the contrary, the continuous reduction of road accident levels is now considered a challenge — a challenge which indeed warrants considerable efforts.

For example, in Australia and Canada, great progress has been made. Similarly, in Europe we can look to the successes of countries like Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Against the background of rising vehicle populations and increases in driver numbers, these States have actually recorded dramatic reductions in road casualty levels. In parallel to these success stories, other European countries have also achieved considerable improvements. It is important to underline that these successes are generally based on the adoption of wide-ranging planned approaches to road safety policy with ambitious targets, where all of the actors are engaged in the delivery of a strategic approach. Over the past number of years, such an approach has seen road deaths in my own country, Ireland, fall dramatically.

It was also appropriate that the efforts undertaken at the national level should be mirrored and complemented at the level of the European Union. In fact, the European Union has recognized that there is scope for greater advances if all of the member States are prepared to share not just a vision for the future, but also the best practices that have delivered such progress at the national level in the past. Referring to recent developments in this regard, let me highlight the European Road Safety Action Programme, which was presented by the European Commission in June 2003. It has at its centre the goal of the realization of a reduction of 50 per cent in the number of people killed in traffic collisions by 2010 as compared to 2001. In the current European Union of 15 member States, there are 1.3 million accidents annually, causing 40,000 deaths and 1.7 million injuries, with an estimated economic cost of 2 per cent of the gross domestic product of the European Union. Our aim therefore translates into 20,000 fewer deaths per year.

The European Parliament and the Council of European Ministers of Transport have on many occasions subscribed explicitly to this goal. In doing so, they have placed road safety very high on the political agenda; it will remain there and requires a constant effort.

The Programme identifies, as the main causes of collisions and as major contributing factors to their effects, excessive speed, drinking and driving and the non-use of protective measures, such as seat belts and motorcycle helmets. For this reason, it underlines the urgent need for stricter enforcement of existing legislation in that respect. Furthermore, the Action Programme provides European States with an overview of the relevant information and the actions — legislative and otherwise — which are required in order to achieve the goal of a 50 per cent reduction of road accident fatalities. It also describes structures through which we can better address these issues and provides the information required to replicate the performance of those States that have taken the lead in road safety policy.

The Programme I speak about also places great emphasis on the absolute need to engage civil society in the delivery of better road safety. To that effect, it encourages actors in the public and private sectors to

sign a Road Safety Charter, in which those actors should list their individual aims and actions concerning road safety. I had the privilege of hosting a ceremony in Dublin last week, where, in the presence of the Ministers of Transport of the European Union, the Charter was signed by some 39 organizations and companies, each of which made specific, measurable commitments to improving road safety.

The European Union Action Programme also places great emphasis on the need for the gathering of collision data and information relating to the collision prevention programmes deployed in each of the member States. That will be achieved through the establishment of the European Road Safety Observatory, which will disseminate information on best practices in addressing road safety challenges.

Of course, it is clear to all that we should exchange best practices across all nations worldwide, not just within the European Union. We can all learn from the relevant experience of other nations in this context. To meet this challenge, the draft resolution proposed for adoption at this plenary meeting promotes the concept of the designation of one organization through which the concept of the sharing of information and experience can be promoted on a worldwide basis.

The success of road safety programmes in many countries over the past years and, indeed, decades bears testimony to the possibilities that exist for addressing what has become one of the greatest threats to global health. Replicating that success through the promotion of such programmes worldwide is a challenge for all — and an opportunity. I urge all to take up this challenge and to drastically reduce the number of our people that needlessly lose their lives on roads every day of every year.

Mr. Mineta (United States of America): It is a great honour to have this opportunity to represent my country today as the General Assembly turns its attention to the critical issue of road traffic safety. This is an issue about which my country cares deeply and passionately. I would like to commend the Sultanate of Oman for its leadership in bringing this issue to the forefront of the international agenda, because road traffic safety is, indeed, a global problem. We have heard this morning from the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, and the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Mr. Lee Jong-wook, about the magnitude of the challenge that we face.

More than 1 million human beings lose their lives every year because of traffic crashes. That is 1 million mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives who do not make it home. Adding to the tragedy is the fact that so many of those deaths are preventable.

The costs are tremendous in terms of human lives and pain and suffering, as well as in terms of economic costs and the lost opportunities. The United Nations estimates that the economic cost of road traffic injuries is $518 billion per year. Imagine the additional pain and suffering that could be alleviated if our nations could instead invest those lost monies in education, health care, economic development, transportation and other pressing needs.

If we do nothing, however, even more people will die needlessly. The World Health Organization projects that by the year 2020 traffic crashes will rank third among all contributors to the global burden of disease — ahead of malaria, ahead of tuberculosis and ahead of HIV/AIDS.

But my message to the Assembly today is that we need not accept morbidity as the price of mobility — anywhere in the world. Experience has shown that the increased freedom and productivity that transportation brings do not have to come at the price of the safety of our citizens. In the mid-1960s, the United States began focused efforts to make road travel safer. At that time, our country had a death rate of 5.5 fatalities for every 100 million vehicle miles travelled. Since then, much has changed. The United States population has grown substantially, and the number of both cars and drivers on our roads has increased tremendously. Yet, during that same period, we were able to cut the death rate by 72 per cent, to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles travelled. That is a truly astonishing accomplishment over a relatively short period of time.

But we know that we can do better. We must do better. 43,000 deaths a year in the United States is unacceptable. That is why President George W. Bush's Administration has established the goal of further reducing the traffic death rate by a third by 2008, to one death per 100 million vehicle miles travelled.

I take particular pride in our country's record when it comes to protecting our most vulnerable citizens: our children. In a single generation, the

United States has dramatically reduced the number of child fatalities in traffic crashes. Today, that number is at a historic low. The approach that we used to help protect our children is illustrative of our traffic safety strategy. In 1966, we established within the national Government one single agency focused on road traffic safety, and we gave it authority to act and a dedicated funding source to get the job done. The agency began collecting reliable data on how safe our children were when riding in motor vehicles. We soon learned a very important fact: more children were killed in highway crashes than by any disease.

Using the data, we were able to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing child fatalities. Our engineers designed cars to better absorb impact and to protect children in the event of a crash. They designed car seats, and we educated parents on the importance of using them to keep their children safe, instead of allowing them to ride on a lap, or on the floor, or in the back of a truck. We established standards for vehicle and child seat manufacturers, and our legislators passed child passenger safety laws to ensure that this very vulnerable segment of our society was protected. And finally, our traffic safety agency has been working for 30 years to improve emergency medical services and trauma systems so that crash victims are properly cared for after a crash.

We recognize that the nature of road safety problems differs from country to country, and so too must our solutions. Still, there is much we can learn from one another. It is my sincere hope that today's meeting will mark the beginning of a broad-based and ongoing international collaboration focused on all aspects of road traffic safety: the behaviour of drivers, passengers and pedestrians; vehicle safety; and the roadway environment.

I am here today to declare that the United States stands ready to share its experience and expertise with the global community and itself to learn from other nations as we work together to prevent roadway deaths and injuries. We will continue to work within the United Nations, particularly within Working Parties 1 and 29 of the Economic Commission for Europe, to exchange information on best practices and to develop recommendations for a comprehensive road injury prevention strategy addressing vehicle, human behaviour and infrastructure aspects.

In a message to the international community on World Health Day 2004, our President, George W. Bush, expressed America's strong commitment "to traffic safety and to the goal of saving more lives throughout the world".

The time for action is now. Providence has given us an opportunity to change history. No other public health crisis is so clearly curable. No other cause of death is so clearly preventable, if only the world's leaders join together to educate each other and our citizens about how to stop the needless deaths on our roads.

That is the job before all of us. If we stand resolved to do our jobs, millions in our global family will be spared pain and heartache, and that is a goal worthy of all of our efforts.

Mr. Tussumo (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First I wish to thank the President for having convened this meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the question of the global crisis in road traffic accidents. The relevance and timeliness of this endeavour is beyond question, bearing in mind the fact that traffic accidents are becoming a prime cause of human death. According to forecasts by the World Health Organization (WHO), by the year 2020 road accident injuries could become a more serious threat than malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Of special concern is the fact that, increasingly, the victims of road traffic accidents are young people.

Analysis of the situation shows that road accidents have a physical and psychological impact not only on the victims, but also on their families. They have a negative social and economic impact, particularly on health, and are draining resources from economic and social objectives. Bearing in mind the scope of the crisis, we feel that efforts must be made by the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes to develop a comprehensive policy in the area of road traffic safety. We fully share the view that United Nations agencies could include road traffic safety in their strategies in such areas as sustainable development, the environment, gender issues and policies related to the interests of children, women and the elderly.

We also feel that road traffic safety should be the focal point of attention of countries whose roads are part of international transit corridors. The Almaty Programme of Action to expand cooperation among

landlocked and transit developing countries emphasized particularly that the main problems of road safety are the absence of unified technical standards and poor technical servicing. Given the extreme urgency of the problem, Kazakhstan considers draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, submitted by Oman, as enhancing security for road traffic throughout the world, with special emphasis on the need to strengthen international cooperation in order to bolster the measures taken by developing countries and countries in transition in particular to build their capacity to provide for road safety. It is very important that a coordinating role within the context of the United Nations on issues of road traffic safety be given to WHO, whose work will be supported by the United Nations regional commissions.

Kazakhstan is the centre of the Euro-Asian continent. The overall length of our roads is more than 100,000 kilometres, 13,000 of which are of international importance. Roughly 15 million people live in the territory of Kazakhstan, using more than 1.4 million cars. The Government of Kazakhstan gives priority attention to road safety matters. Legislation in the area of traffic safety in the Republic is nearly complete. The basic provisions of the State system have been enshrined in our law on road traffic safety, which governs the legal norms for ensuring road traffic safety.

The law establishes the legal norms regulating road safety issues. It lays down the principle of prioritizing the lives and health of citizens over the economic imperatives of business activities, as well as State responsibility for ensuring road safety. It also sets out the authorities of government and State organs and establishes the responsibilities of participants in road safety management whose activities are linked to transport and traffic organizations.

Three State programmes regulating traffic and road safety have been established and integrated since we achieved independence. We also have established two advisory bodies whose work it is to prepare strategic proposals in this area. We are a party to the United Nations Convention on Road Traffic and to other conventions in this area.

We wish to point out in particular that the way in which we manage traffic and traffic safety conforms to international requirements and that large towns in Kazakhstan have automated traffic control systems. Here, we make use of the latest technologies. In connection with national legislation, our Ministry of the Interior is addressing the issue of road traffic safety and is administering a uniform State policy.

On 7 April we observed the traditional celebration of World Health Day. This year we will address the problem of injuries resulting from road traffic accidents. Kazakhstan fully supports the Secretary-General's appeal for international cooperation and unity in this global campaign.

Mrs. Gonzalez (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to be here on behalf of my country to speak about a subject that is of such sensitivity in today's world. Roads are the constant scene of death, and this is something we are all obliged to correct. Costa Rica has demonstrated its firm political commitment to addressing the issue of road safety. This is reflected in our national road safety programme, through which we have proposed to tackle the issue by means of measures in six areas: infrastructure, traffic police, the education system, driver licensing procedures, strengthening legislation, and related information campaigns.

On infrastructure, we have identified projects in our country that have ignored road safety or have been devoid of road safety content: it had been our habit to build roads without introducing the necessary road safety criteria into their design. In Costa Rica, this is now changing.

Secondly, over the past two years we have completely changed the role of the traffic police, who used to engage in passive supervision and who reacted only after an accident had taken place; we are ensuring that they begin to carry out more active supervision. I believe that our police now understand that they have a primary role to play in accident prevention.

Thirdly, President Pacheco has signed a degree introducing road safety education into curriculums from kindergarten to college.

Specifically with regard to the courses that must be taken to obtain a driving license, we are modifying both the theoretical and practical tests.

On information campaigns, let me highlight the seat-belt campaign my country launched a mere six months ago under the motto "For love's sake, use your belt", with the support of the International Automobile Federation. We were surprised to find that only six

months on, our legislators have adopted a law making seat-belt use mandatory in Costa Rica.

Costa Rica is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, introduced by Oman, precisely because we believe these to be key elements in preventing continued deaths on our roads. Costa Rica believes that all the actions that have been proposed, and which I have just outlined, have enabled us in just one year to prevent 50 deaths compared with the previous year. We have thus achieved a one-point reduction in death rate per 1,000 inhabitants since beginning our national road safety programme about two years ago. We firmly believe that this battle is worth the effort; we can win only by making it a priority both for government and for civil society.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In observance of this year's World Health Day, the World Health Organization and the World Bank launched the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. The Chinese delegation takes this opportunity to convey its heartfelt thanks to the World Health Organization, the World Bank and experts from a number of countries for preparing that report. We believe that the report's recommendations for improvements will be very useful to all Governments in further improving road safety.

The present situation with respect to global road safety is most grave. Worldwide, an estimated 1.2 million people are killed in road accidents each year and another 50 million are injured or disabled. The result is a direct economic loss in excess of $500 billion. It is projected that by 2020 traffic deaths will reach 2.34 million a year, making them the third largest factor in the overall burden of disease and injury — well ahead of AIDS, tuberculosis and lower respiratory infections. It is worth noting that 90 per cent of traffic-accident injuries occur in low- and middle-income countries, a trend that continues.

Those facts demonstrate that traffic injuries are an increasingly serious public health hazard. Without immediate effective preventive action, traffic injuries will have even more serious economic and social consequences for all countries, especially the vast number of developing countries.

As the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* points out, "Road safety is no accident". Traffic injuries can be controlled and prevented through rational analysis and appropriate measures. All Governments bear primary responsibility in that regard; at the same time, the business, health, education and media sectors and non-governmental organizations must pool their efforts. We support close cooperation among the General Assembly, the regional economic and social commissions, the World Health Organization and the World Bank with a view to increasing the attention devoted to this problem. It is our belief that, with the concerted efforts of the international community, the goal of reducing global road traffic injuries can definitely be achieved.

China is a developing country with a population of 1.3 billion. It faces a grave road safety situation. In the period 2001 to 2003 China's traffic death toll exceeded 100,000 per year, with annual injuries averaging more than 500,000 and with economic losses of some 3 billion yuan renminbi: more than $300 million. The major causes of traffic injuries are the lack of safety awareness among drivers, poor road conditions and traffic environment, and inadequate management standards.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to its work on road safety. President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao have repeatedly issued key directives with regard to firmly reversing the trend towards increasing numbers of road accidents. The State Council has made clear that a goal of the Government is to significantly reduce injuries from traffic accidents from the present high rate, to get them under control and to effect a gradual decline.

In order to achieve that goal, last year the State Council established an inter-ministerial joint conference mechanism for road traffic safety, with the Ministry of Public Security as the lead agency and with the participation of 15 governmental departments to coordinate and plan road traffic safety activities. In October 2003, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China adopted a road traffic safety act, the primary aim of which is to protect the safety of people. Taking into full consideration the many risk factors of road traffic, that law codifies the various preventive legal measures, including in particular clear provisions for the safety of vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians. The law will enter into force on 1 May. We are sure that it will play an important role in improving road traffic safety and in preventing traffic injuries in China.

Mr. Kiryanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Road traffic injuries continue to be among the most urgent socio-economic problems facing the world community. The Secretary-General's report "Global road safety crisis" and the report of the World Health Organization (WHO) fully illustrate the urgency of the problem and lay out a strategy for the inclusion of all countries of the world in a solution to the crisis.

Among one of the most important areas of strategy development is the participation of State structures — above all, the Governments of our countries — in developing and implementing national road safety programmes, with the support of State financing. Naturally, these programmes must take into account the experience of Governments in addressing road traffic injuries.

The Russian Federation fully shares the concern of the United Nations with regard to the global crisis in road traffic safety, as reflected in the resolutions adopted on 22 May and 5 November 2003. Unfortunately, the situation with respect to road traffic safety in the Russian Federation remains highly unfavourable. In 2003, there were 204,267 accidents on Russian roads, in which 35,600 people died and more than 244,000 were injured. Moreover, an increase in road traffic injury indicators has been observed four years in a row. Since 2002, the number of accidents has increased by 10.8 per cent, the number of deaths by 7 per cent and the number of injuries by 12.7 per cent.

As in the past, a major role in traffic injuries is played by the human factor, in particular by aggressive driving. As members know, this problem was addressed during the Fourth Road Safety Week, observed in the countries of Europe on the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe from 5 to 11 April, and the special seminar that was held in Geneva within the framework of the Week.

The illegal aggressive behaviour of drivers is the primary cause of the high rate of accidents. In the Russian Federation, almost 80 per cent of road traffic accidents are connected with driver violations of traffic rules. The most common violations causing accidents are, inter alia, drunk driving, speeding and driving on the wrong side of the road. We fully understand the tragic nature of the situation and feel that a solution to the crisis lies in a comprehensive approach to the problem of road accidents, including by improving road traffic safety legislation and by implementing the relevant international norms.

The Russian Federation is currently working on improving and strengthening legal accountability for flagrant traffic violations, the main cause of road accidents incurring death and injury. My country is actively seeking the most effective measures to ensure the maximum possible reduction of social and economic losses from accidents. At the federal and regional levels, we are developing a number of measures, including the organization of passenger transportation, especially that involving children; the prevention of traffic injury for children of school and pre-school age; the improvement of construction and operational safety in transportation and of traffic organization in towns; and other important steps. Special attention is being given to the infrastructure necessary to ensuring pedestrian safety. Bearing in mind the importance of that problem, a number of measures are being taken in towns and developed areas to separate pedestrian and traffic movement.

Among the activities aimed at improving basic road traffic safety, the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation plans to hold parliamentary hearings in June on the subject of optimizing the legal basis for ensuring road traffic safety in our country. The positive results achieved in that area include several changes and additions to the legal norms governing road traffic, above all the traffic regulations of the Russian Federation. Those norms are based on the relevant international conventions and agreements and on the recommendations elaborated by the Economic Commission for Europe Inland Transport Committee and its Working Party on Road Traffic Safety.

We would also note that an important stage has been reached with respect to the improvement of international legal road traffic safety norms with the elaboration of a substantial package of amendments to the 1968 Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, as well as to the 1971 European Agreements supplementing the Conventions. This work has been done by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety, with the participation of a delegation from the Russian Federation. A new system of regulations and traffic signs is being developed for tunnel safety and we shall be introducing a new model national driving test that will considerably facilitate international traffic. In our opinion, one of the most

important innovations of the amendments is the reduction in the acceptable level of blood alcohol from 0.8 to 0.5 mg/ml. In the near future, the Russian Federation will address a confirmed package of amendments to the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, I highly commend the work of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which could fully assume the function of a global forum on road traffic and ensure that the draft resolution to be adopted at this meeting, of which we are a sponsor, will be a further step towards solving a worldwide problem of modern civilization affecting the lives and health of those who travel by road.

Ms. Al-Mulla (Kuwait): I am glad, Mr. President, that you are here and not on the road.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

My delegation extends its gratitude to the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman for its effective and special efforts to address the problem of road safety, a global issue with a negative impact, and a cause of real suffering.

The United Nations system should coordinate international efforts to limit the impact of road accidents. That is in full accordance with the noble objectives for which the Organization was established. We hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution presented earlier by Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

My delegation became aware of this agenda item when it was introduced at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We have heard all the horrific statistics published on the negative impact of road accidents, in particular that approximately 1.26 million people worldwide were killed in such accidents in 2000. The number of deaths from injuries of all kinds is expected to rise to 8.4 million by 2020. We have learned that road accidents are the third largest cause of death worldwide.

Like all our brother States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, we suffer from the negative effects of road accidents. The latest official statistics, published in the context of World Health Day, show that in Kuwait, road traffic accidents reached 36,000 in 2002, causing approximately 315 deaths. In 2003, there were 45,000 road accidents, causing 372 deaths, mostly of men between 21 and 40, which are the most productive years for men in any society. This situation demands that the Government and society work tirelessly to prevent road accidents. One must take into account the fact that Kuwait's population does not exceed 1 million.

At the regional level, road accidents in the Gulf States are the leading cause of death: there is one death every two days as a result of road accidents. Kuwait and its brother countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council attach all due importance to this issue, as reflected in the periodic meetings among traffic officials of those States to coordinate their approach to reducing the number of road accidents. Road safety week, the so-called Traffic Week, is held simultaneously in all the Gulf States; there are Traffic Week seminars and public awareness and education campaigns on the need for safety measures and enforceable legislation to reduce traffic accidents, which, as I said, are the leading cause of death in our countries.

We have also held a series of meetings and seminars on this subject. In particular, I refer to the first seminar on road traffic safety, held in Muscat in 1992, and the recent Qatar meeting devoted to road accidents, in which more than 1,600 researchers and specialists from all sectors participated.

We shall continue our international and regional efforts to create an awareness and world interest network in order to mitigate the effects of road accidents on people's lives, especially because this crisis is caused mainly by human beings. We must find a solution and prevent the incidents that cause death and disability.

Kuwait believes that these statistics are more than mere numbers. They should motivate us to attach great importance to this issue at the international level — the same degree of importance that we attach to other deadly phenomena, such as war, epidemics and malaria, AIDS and other diseases. This is all the more true because the social and economic consequences of road accidents — which leave people dead or handicapped — on poor societies and developing countries, particularly in South and East Asia, are very clear. Statistics indicate that the annual cost of road accidents is approximately $580 billion. Thus, it is urgent that international assistance and cooperation be

extended to the developing countries that are most affected.

In that connection, we stress the need to develop international plans and programmes to prevent such accidents. Such programmes must take into account the financial situation of developing countries so that they do not become an additional burden on those countries. They must also take into account differences among the various legislative systems of States.

To that end, Kuwait welcomes the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) in this area, which have aimed to highlight the issue and which made road safety the main theme of World Health Day on 7 April 2004. We also pay tribute to the joint initiative of the French Government and WHO which led to the convening of an international conference on road safety and accident prevention, held in Paris on 7 April. My country will study the recommendations contained in the *World report* issued at that conference.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): We thank the Acting President and the Deputy Secretary-General for their introductory remarks. We also commend the World Health Organization for its contribution to this debate, including through the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. We express our appreciation to the delegation of Oman for its steadfastness of purpose in inscribing this item on the agenda of the General Assembly and in highlighting it.

We in India attach importance to addressing the problem of road traffic safety and to reducing the adverse consequences of traffic accidents. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been entrusted with responsibility for formulating road safety policies. The Ministry compiles data on road accidents and prepares annual road safety plans.

Various initiatives being implemented include publicity campaigns, grants-in-aid to non-governmental organizations for organizing road safety programmes and creating awareness, a national highway accident relief service scheme, refresher training for heavy vehicle drivers and the setting up of model driving training schools. Publicity programmes include the printing of calendars and the broadcasting of advertisements on radio, television and other mass media. A road safety week is organized every year to raise awareness. Last year, 22,000 drivers of heavy vehicles in the unorganized sector were provided refresher training through non-governmental organizations and local institutions. Awards have been instituted at various levels to recognize important contributions made to road safety.

The linkage between poverty and underdevelopment on the one hand and road safety on the other has been brought out very clearly in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/228), as well as in the report co-published by the World Health Organization (WHO), which was released on 7 April. Factors such as driver fatigue, old and unsafe vehicle design, unclear marking of intersections and unsatisfactory driver training are some of the more important contributory factors to road accidents. The Secretary-General's report points out that a number of strategies and policies have contributed to dramatic decreases in road crashes in developed countries. It goes on to say, very correctly, that those strategies cannot simply be transferred to, or replicated by, developing countries in a purely mechanical way.

Given this scenario, the imperative, in our view, for increasing international cooperation to assist the developing countries to effectively address issues of road safety cannot be overemphasized. We appreciate the efforts being made in this regard through the World Health Organization. We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the regional commissions of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). ESCAP has, along with a number of other initiatives, developed an aggregated and computerized Asia-Pacific road accident database. That database, together with its user-friendly software, is aimed at improving road safety by providing a tool to administrators and policy makers to analyse the safety situation in comparison with that of other countries. The software also assists in the development of appropriate strategies and realistic targets and in the monitoring of the effectiveness of national road safety action plans. We are happy that India proposed that initiative for the work programme of the very first session of the ESCAP Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development. We are collaborating with ESCAP on a pilot project in India for the development of a national road accident database. This project is being funded by the Government of India.

Despite the initiatives already under way, there is scope for further international cooperation. Such cooperation needs, in our view, to extend beyond the

development of international instruments or the universalization of standards that may have been developed in one region. We are happy that draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, which we will be adopting today and which we feel privileged to have sponsored, recognizes the importance of supporting the efforts of developing countries to build capacities in the field of road safety and of providing financial and technical support for their efforts. We look forward to the effective fulfilment of that commitment.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): I should like to begin by adding my voice to those of representatives who have spoken before me in expressing our appreciation to you, Sir, to the Secretary-General and to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) for sharing your thoughts and visions on the issues of global road safety. I wish to commend the Government of France, the World Health Organization and the World Bank on their initiative in preparing and launching last week the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* to promote much-needed awareness on this issue. I also wish to thank the Government of Oman for taking a lead in bringing this topic before the General Assembly. My thanks also go to His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Oman for his hard work, patience and guidance throughout the process of formulating the draft resolution at hand in document A/58/L.60/Rev.1.

Preventing road accidents is not anyone's responsibility in particular. Yet, it is everyone's problem. Therefore, to succeed in our endeavour of making our roads safer, concerted efforts and commitments are needed at both local and international levels.

The WHO report thoroughly analyses global road safety problems and presents practical and flexible recommendations for the improvement of road safety. Those recommendations coincide with a majority of Thailand's multisectoral policy in tackling road safety issues. I wish to share the essence of those policies with the Assembly, as they may be of relevance to the efforts undertaken by Member States.

It is now evident that in many countries, especially developing ones, motorized-transport deaths and injuries lead to significant social and economic losses. Thailand is no exception. Road accidents are one of the top three public health problems in Thailand. In 2002, social and economic losses resulting from motorized-transport deaths and injuries in Thailand amounted to 2.13 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. In that year, over 13,000 deaths and more than 1 million injuries were caused by road accidents. Several thousand victims were disabled and lost their livelihoods. Three fourths of the victims were motorcyclists, with an average mortality rate of almost two deaths per hour. Fully aware of the magnitude and impact of this problem, the Government has placed the reduction of road traffic injury high on its national agenda. Since 2002, the Government has emphasized the urgent need to design systemic policies to tackle road safety problems at all levels: local, municipal, provincial and national. The Government realizes that, first and foremost, political commitment and consistent, strict enforcement of road traffic laws at the municipal, provincial and national levels are needed in order for initiatives related to road safety to generate the intended results.

In 2003, the Government established the Road Safety Operations Centre (RSOC) to be the lead agency in coordinating efforts of various sectors of the country in designing and implementing multisectoral, integrated and systematic action plans that would effectively tackle the nation's road safety problems. Headed by a Deputy Prime Minister, the Centre has the sufficient authority and leadership to prepare a plan of action to mobilize resources and encourage cooperation from government agencies, private organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society. RSOC has been able to establish several initiatives aimed at reducing accidents and improving safety on roads: introducing a "Don't drink and drive" campaign to alert drivers, motorcyclists and other road users to the dangers of drinking and driving; requiring motorcyclists to wear safety helmets and to turn on their headlights during daytime to increase their visibility to other motorists; imposing mandatory requirements for wearing seat belts; and enforcing speed limits, improving road conditions and encouraging the use of rest areas to ensure greater safety on the roads.

To complement those initiatives, the Government enacted legislation that increases fines and penalties for traffic violations. A policy that emphasizes stringent and prompt enforcement of the laws was adopted at the same time. Traffic police throughout Thailand are now equipped with blood-alcohol meters. Motorcyclists are now required to wear safety helmets,

and automobile passengers are required to wear seat belts at all times. Traffic police are now assisted by community volunteers to randomly set up checkpoints on major highways, expressways and local roads to detect violators. Any driver that has an excessive blood-alcohol level is fined and detained instantly before being summoned to court for penalties and community services. Motorcyclists who do not wear safety helmets are being ticketed on the spot.

Aside from stringent rules and regulations for motorists, the Government has also examined other issues associated with road safety in an attempt to address these problems in an integrated manner. Financially, we are trying to mobilize more financial resources to support road safety initiatives through the establishment of a Road Safety Fund. On data collection, the Government is upgrading injury and accident surveillance systems to collect standardized and reliable accident data for future planning. On the infrastructure front, various government agencies are improving road safety by promoting safer road planning and design, reducing hazardous locations and improving road conditions by repairing black spots and installing more traffic signs, and inducing greater use of rest areas by improving the facilities and services provided. Through education, the Government is instilling safe driving and transportation habits in children and teenagers, who are the most vulnerable to road accidents. On public relations, the Government is attempting to raise public awareness of the importance of safe driving practices and vehicle safety standards, while fostering a friendly attitude on all roads. Last but not least, our private sectors are actively involved in promoting road safety campaigns such as those on no cellular phone use while driving and on the offer of free safety helmets with a motorcycle purchase.

Thailand's Road Safety Operations Centre has been in operation for less than two years. Nevertheless, results to date are encouraging. Public awareness of the importance of safe driving and riding practices is rising, as reflected in the decreasing numbers of drunk driving incidents recorded in metropolitan areas and in the decreasing number of motorcyclists who are fined for not wearing safety helmets.

In support of efforts undertaken at the international level, the Government designated 2004 as the National Year of Road Safety in order to complement the WHO global road safety campaign. As roads continue to serve as an economic and social link between peoples, Thailand will continue to do its utmost to improve road safety in Thailand. We would also be happy to share our road safety initiatives and their results with interested countries.

As the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the WHO have clearly stated, with close coordination and collaboration from all relevant sectors, road accidents can be prevented. My delegation therefore wishes to encourage all Member States to deploy their best efforts in assessing and addressing national road safety problems, drawing upon the recommendations of reports of the Secretary-General and of the WHO as basic guidelines. My delegation also wishes to call on countries that possess expertise on road safety to share their best practices and knowledge with other countries to complement their endeavours.

At the same time, my delegation wishes to urge the United Nations system, including the WHO, and other relevant international organizations to strengthen their support to Member States that need assistance in carrying out their initiatives. My delegation strongly believes that, with the commitment of all Member States and the international community as a whole, together we can strive to make our roads safer and to maximize the benefits of road transport for all countries and peoples.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt thanks the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman and the Omani delegation for their vigorous efforts to mobilize international support in addressing the global road safety crisis. Egypt is a sponsor of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, which is before the Assembly this morning, because it is aware of the growing need for a holistic approach to improving global road safety and for stanching the continuing flow of blood from traffic accidents. That is true especially because traffic injuries are sapping human and productive potential in countries throughout the world, especially in developing countries — which desperately need all their sources of economic and human energy to meet the challenges of development.

Egypt shares the pain and suffering of the rest of the world with respect to road tragedies. Like other countries, Egypt suffers human and economic losses; it loses citizens who could be contributing to development. Moreover, road accidents entail vast

costs in the provision of medical treatment for victims, and they drain our productive capacity.

For years, Egypt has been developing and implementing policies intended to tackle the crisis. Most Government organs participate in implementing those policies, and civil society — through various organizations within the country — is playing a key role by launching awareness campaigns and providing support and assistance to victims and their families.

The draft resolution before the Assembly lays out a clear vision with respect to engendering and enhancing international cooperation to address the road safety crisis. Here, Egypt welcomes the draft resolution's invitation to the World Health Organization (WHO), working in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to act as a coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system, and its request that regional expertise be drawn upon.

The information and statistics set out in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, co-published by the WHO, further clarify the dimensions of the global crisis; the report stresses the pressing need for concerted international efforts to address the global road safety crisis. These tasks must not remain the sole preserve of the WHO and the regional economic commissions: it is the duty of all relevant regional and international institutions and organizations to participate. The private sector too has a pivotal role to play.

Egypt calls upon the Secretariat to include in the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session an overview of the areas in which support can be extended to developing countries. As I have noted, those countries are at a disadvantage in facing up to the road safety crisis. We hope that this would further contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): As we speak today, another 3,000 deaths are occurring as a result of road traffic accidents. Another 100,000 people are sustaining injuries. Those staggeringly high casualty figures are nearly as high as those for global conflicts, HIV/AIDS, anti-personnel mines and other major global public health concerns.

Most often, road traffic accidents do not attract as much media attention, but their impact on society can be just as adverse. Ninety per cent of these injuries occur — and will continue to occur — in developing countries. The dead or injured are often young, in their productive years, which leaves their families and economies deprived and affected. What is alarming is that, if the current trends continue, those numbers will increase by 65 per cent over the next 15 years, probably making road accidents one of the top few global public health concerns. The lack of reliable and accurate data on road traffic casualties renders it even more difficult to assess the actual extent of losses, both human and socio-economic.

What is encouraging is that most of these tragic losses can be prevented and even significantly reduced if their root causes are addressed effectively and collectively. What is required is an immediate mass awareness campaign about the seriousness of the global road safety problem at the national and international levels. What is most desirable is a true partnership among all stakeholders, including Governments, global and regional organizations, civil societies, private sectors and the international donor community in order to be able to face up to the challenge together.

Bangladesh, being a densely populated developing country in the midst of a significant societal transformation, has long identified and placed the road safety problem amongst its major national public safety concerns. The high prevalence of death and injuries from road traffic accidents every year cause us irreconcilable human suffering and irreplaceable loss of valuable lives and resources. A strong and steady civil society movement, entitled "We demand safe roads" with a manifesto entitled "Roads must be safe, not death traps", has since 1989 garnered tremendous public awareness and support to our national road safety movement. The Government is making every effort to own and drive the national road safety policies and programmes.

22 October, preceding United Nations Day, is observed in Bangladesh as the National Safe Road Day. On that day we reaffirm our national resolve to save every life possible from the tragic consequences of road accidents and hold country-wide awareness programmes. These include the collection of blood donations, the organization of seminars and rallies, and publications for citizens encouraging them to exercise greater individual civic responsibility and to observe safety measures on the road. Despite our limited

resources and institutional capacities, we plan to take this social movement to the regional and global levels through governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society and private sector partnerships. We seek the support of friends and global institutions in this endeavour.

It is in this spirit of ownership that Bangladesh has joined the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1 on the global road safety crisis. We express our deep appreciation to the Permanent Representative and delegation of Oman for their tireless efforts in negotiating this consensus text, which enjoys cross-cutting support. The World Health Organization and the World Bank are also deserving of high praise for their proactive institutional approach to the global road safety crisis, including the launching of the first *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, and for the observance of the World Health Day this year with the theme "Road safety". It could not have been more befitting.

Indeed, now is the time to act on the key recommendations of the *report*, particularly the systems approach on five critical areas for effective interventions for safer roads. Minimizing risk and optimizing safety is key. While countries develop a strong will and well-organized national social awareness movements to prevent our roads from becoming death traps, commensurate financial and technical assistance to implement those road safety capacities must be forthcoming. Bangladesh also attaches great importance to the sharing of best practices on road safety among Member States and within the United Nations system through the dissemination and management of knowledge using United Nations regional commissions, the United Nations Department of Public Information and the World Health Organization. As a member of the Economic and Social Council and Chair of the Committee on Information, we will do our utmost to achieve these objectives. The engagement of and networking among the media, civil society and the private sector are of paramount importance, as Governments alone can only do so much.

Last but not least, Bangladesh calls upon all Member States and the Secretariat to consider the proclamation by the United Nations of an international day to be observed by peoples of the world as their global road safety day. Such a day, we strongly believe, would heighten awareness among the wide range of actors and sectors about their required level of involvement. We would suggest 22 October in that regard.

Let us act now, together, coherently and in a sustained manner to evolve public health and development strategies to minimize the scourge of road accidents. Let us ensure that these are mutually reinforcing, taking us closer to the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): While road traffic safety should first and foremost be addressed at the national and regional levels, it should also clearly be dealt with at the international level, preferably within the United Nations system. At the outset, I would therefore like to express Iceland's continued support for the laudable Omani initiative and thank the delegation of Oman for bringing this important subject matter to our attention.

The Icelandic Government has recently published a traffic safety plan to the year 2012. The main aim is to make Iceland a model society in road traffic safety and to raise awareness among the public that one accident is one too many. We have already experienced a reduction in fatal and other serious accidents, but the goal is a further 40-per cent decrease in such accidents in the next eight years. From 1980 to 1989, the death toll was 10.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, but in 1990 to 2000 it was reduced to 7.8.

The emphasis of the new traffic safety plan will be on safer speed; the use of safety equipment, such as seatbelts and safety seats for children; safer drivers with improved education and tests; preventing driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or fatigue; improving the safety of roads and their environment; and strengthening police patrol and the effectiveness of the justice system in dealing with traffic law violations.

A study published in Iceland on the occasion of World Health Day on 7 April found that, while cars and roads have become safer, the three main risks to road traffic safety are speeding, drunk driving and not using seat belts. All these risks are very much within the responsibility as well as control of the individuals concerned.

It is believed that, if all drivers in Iceland were to respect speed limits, fatal accidents would be 35 to 40 per cent fewer. It has also been established that, in the years 1998 to 2000, 46 per cent of the people who died

in traffic accidents in Iceland did not use seat belts. Many of them could have saved their own lives by using them. Driving under the influence of alcohol is still a problem, but here the emphasis is on preventive measures. Surveys indicate that some progress has been made.

In Iceland, good cooperation between all the parties concerned has been essential in achieving success in improving road traffic safety and many campaigns have been launched throughout the years to engage and increase awareness among the public. The study that was issued on World Health Day was made by a committee consisting of representatives from all sectors of society, including the Government, the municipalities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The study established that traffic law violations make up 72 per cent of all registered law violations in the country, at an enormous cost to society, both in human and financial terms.

It is those negative consequences to our societies that make it worthwhile for all of us to also address this problem at the international level. In recent years, research on traffic safety has increased and, hopefully, more knowledge will result to add to traffic safety worldwide. For our part, we stand ready to share our experiences with other countries.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): My delegation extends its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the global road safety crisis (A/58/228). The report presents an excellent overview of the humanitarian crisis that affects the lives of individuals and communities globally.

We would also like to thank Mr. Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), for his statement on the theme of road safety, as part of the World Health Day observance on 7 April 2004. My delegation extends many thanks also to the World Health Organization for including the theme of road safety as part of World Health Day, on 7 April 2004. This is a clear indication that road safety is not only a political and social concern but, more important, a health and safety issue as well. I would also like to extend our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Oman for spearheading and fine-tuning the draft resolution on global road safety (A/58/L.60/Rev.1), which I am certain will provide a common platform on which all Member States can be persuaded to reduce the number of road accidents.

According to statistics released by the Global Road Safety Partnership, a programme initiated by the World Bank, about 1.2 million people are killed in road accidents each year; most of these occur in developing countries. The developing countries' share of the death toll is a staggering 86 per cent, while they account for a mere 40 per cent of the world's motor vehicles. That imposes a financial burden of more than $60 billion each year — an amount exceeding the entire annual flow of official development assistance to those countries. It also adds to the severe pressure placed on medical facilities and utilizes much-needed finances, which could be more gainfully used elsewhere in the development process.

A survey recently conducted by the World Health Organization in United Nations Member countries shows that road accidents are the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 5 and 29 and are the third leading cause of death for people between the ages of 30 and 44. The latter group actively contributes to the national economy, and the demise of such people results in loss of income to their families and loss of skills and labour to the national labour market. The WHO report forecasts that there will be an 80-per-cent increase in traffic fatalities in low- and middle-income countries by 2020 if preventive measures are not taken immediately.

As road safety is a global issue, the draft resolution will require our collective efforts to set up mechanisms that will drive strategies to assist in reducing road accidents. It is important to note that most accidents and injuries are preventable — if adequate resources and suitable measures are in place. While the primary responsibility lies with Member States, there is an even greater need to strengthen partnerships among Member States and between States and the United Nations system for sharing knowledge and best practices and maximizing the use of limited resources. In this regard, regional coordination and cooperation must also be reinforced to assist developing countries in their respective regions.

Allow me to cite some of our national statistics. Indications are that road accidents decreased by 25 per cent over the period 1995-2002, while the number of licensed motor vehicles increased by 31 per cent over the same period. The situation is characterized by the fact that in 2002 all types of road accidents witnessed an 11 per cent decrease compared to 2001. Casualties sustained in road traffic accidents increased by 10 per

cent in 2002 compared to 2001, and 34 per cent of casualties are made up of pedestrians. Forty-seven per cent of the total casualties and 52 per cent of total fatalities were recorded in the 20-40 year-old age bracket. While fatalities fell by 6 per cent, serious hospitalized cases rose by 30 per cent. The highest number of accidents occurred on Fridays and Saturdays.

Children are no exception; they are more vulnerable and more prone to road accidents. In Fiji children of 15 years of age and under accounted for 16 per cent of total casualties and 19 per cent of fatalities in 2002.

This reduction in the trend of accident statistics reflects the efforts of the Fiji National Road Safety Council to reduce accident figures. Those efforts include proactively launching awareness campaigns around the country to promote road safety for all road users, and for children in particular. Educating road users has been the hallmark of the Council in both rural and urban areas. The success of the Council's work is the result of a cordial relationship and a partnership between the Government and the private sector.

Fiji will continue to give priority to road safety. It is an issue worth investing in, in terms of money, time and resources. My country is willing to participate in regional initiatives in this regard among Pacific island States.

In conclusion, our human resources are too valuable to squander. Our global responsibility has to provide an environment conducive to ensuring that protection of human life will remain our highest priority.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): Traffic fatalities and injuries are serious problems in all our countries. As the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* was released by the World Health Organization (WHO) just last Wednesday, this is an opportune time for us to take up road safety issues here in the General Assembly and to consider the role that the United Nations can play in promoting traffic safety in Member States.

To be effective, action on road safety must reflect the different situations of traffic rules and regulations and practices that prevail in each country. National Governments usually have the best knowledge of these matters, and thus it is they that should assume the primary responsibility for preventing road injuries, working in close cooperation with municipal and provincial authorities.

The United Nations can assist the efforts of Member States by promoting and facilitating cooperation among them, notably through facilitating the exchange of information about best practices. Each of us can learn from the others' experiences, both success stories and mistakes. The information exchanged, by its nature, is quite technical. Today, expertise on such matters resides in the regional economic commissions. Attempts to strengthen the exchange of information should therefore draw upon their expertise and should avoid duplicating the work that the regional economic commissions have already carried out. Japan believes that this principle should be respected when the World Health Organization assumes its role as a coordinator of road safety activities.

I would like to mention some of Japan's experiences. The number of traffic fatalities in my country hit a peak in 1970, with 16,765 victims. In response to the pressing need to take appropriate measures on this huge social problem, the Basic Law of Road Safety was enacted in the same year, and five-year plans have been implemented since then. In 2002, the number of fatalities fell to 8,326, about half of the 1970 level. Also, Japan is improving safety standards for motor vehicles, taking into account the worldwide harmonization of technical regulations and also promoting the development and wider use of advanced safety vehicles that utilize information technology.

From 1996 to 2003, national authorities implemented emergency measures to reduce traffic injuries, focusing on locations with a high incidence of accidents. The first step was to identify 3,196 such locations, using the data on accidents and traffic compiled respectively by the National Police Agency and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. The authorities on road management and the Public Safety Commission then carried out joint spot checks and detailed analyses of the causes of those accidents and implemented integrated and systematic measures, such as the improvement of intersections and traffic signals. These measures have had the effect of reducing traffic injuries by 30 per cent at those locations.

This latter experience has taught us many lessons. First, a collaborative approach by the Government

agencies concerned is indispensable. Secondly, accurate data are a prerequisite for any effective plan of action. Thirdly, each action has to be evaluated so that there will be a continuing process of improving policy.

While the primary responsibility for road safety lies with national Governments, it is true that developing countries often have limited capacities to address this issue. Japan is aware of this problem and we try to assist those countries which have the political will but lack sufficient resources to act on their resolve. For example, the Government of Japan contributed approximately $9 million to Nepal to improve the condition of 10 intersections in Kathmandu in 2001. This project included the paving of roads, erecting fences to prevent pedestrians from crossing roads, and installing traffic signals for both drivers and pedestrians. In addition, the behavioural aspects of people with regard to road safety were addressed through the preparation of posters for road safety and textbooks for traffic rules and through educational and training programmes.

There are a variety of actors who have a role to play in promoting road safety. We need to bear in mind the responsibilities of each of them. The United Nations is also an actor, but we should consider what real added value it can and will offer. With concerted efforts by all concerned, I believe that we can tackle the huge challenge of road safety efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I am honoured to be addressing the Assembly today and I am particularly glad, I have to say, to have the occasion to do so on the important topic of global road safety. I will be brief, as I know we are trying to get through a number of speakers before lunch. These few comments by Australia are in addition to the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Group, with which we fully associate ourselves.

We consider the issue of road safety to be of great importance and have accorded it a high priority on our domestic political agenda. Our efforts at improving road safety have included a breadth of measures, such as requiring minimum safety standards in the manufacture of motor vehicles, investing in improving the quality and safety of roads, targeting known risk factors associated with motor vehicle accidents through strengthened policing, improving driver behaviour through raising public awareness of risk factors, and initiating programmes to assist young and novice drivers to become better drivers.

Australia is pleased to report that our measures aimed at improving road safety have been highly successful. Whereas in 1970, the number of road traffic deaths recorded in Australia was 30.4 per 100,000 people, by 2003 that figure had dropped by 73 per cent to 8.2 per 100,000 people.

Australia believes that the road fatality rate can be further reduced. To this effect, the Australian Government and Australian State and Territory Governments have adopted a national road safety strategy, supported by action plans, which aims to reduce the road fatality rate per 100,000 people by 40 per cent further, from 9.3 in 1999 to no more than 5.6 by 2010. Achieving this target would mean saving around 3,600 lives over the decade to 2010. It is a difficult target, but is one to which there is national commitment.

In the light of this commitment, which we all share, to do more to achieve improved road safety, Australia welcomes Oman's initiative, and particularly the work of our colleague, the Ambassador of Oman, and his instrumental role in bringing the issue of road safety to the attention of this Organization. While national initiatives may remain the cornerstone of efforts to improve road safety, there is no question that we can all benefit by sharing our experiences in this field, by exchanging information as to best practices and by learning from one another's successes.

What this draft resolution achieves, in inviting the World Health Organization — in cooperation with the various regional commissions — to act as a coordinating body on this issue is to facilitate the very exchange of information that I have spoken of. We are therefore delighted to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Ecuador first wishes to commend the Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman for introducing onto the General Assembly's agenda an issue of such importance to contemporary society as that of the global road safety crisis. Secondly, we wish to reaffirm the readiness of the Government of Ecuador to cooperate with the United Nations in its current endeavour to achieve a significant reduction in accidents and lives lost through

what we might describe as a "road traffic culture" for the international community.

As is rightly reflected in the Secretary-General's report, deaths and injuries resulting from traffic accidents have led to a crisis in the public health sector globally. It is therefore necessary to take urgent measures to address the magnitude of the problem, which in 2000 caused the deaths of approximately 1.2 million people. This prompts us to assert the firm resolve of the Government of Ecuador to pursuing its work not only to improve roads, but also to ensure proper signage and an effective monitoring system that will allow us to provide timely assistance to people injured in vehicular collisions and constantly to update the road traffic education system.

Ecuador is a sponsor of the draft resolution before the Assembly, which we are convinced will be adopted by consensus. We feel absolutely certain that only cooperation between citizens and the relevant authorities in every country will make it possible to reduce the frequency of traffic accidents and significantly to lower the resultant death rate in the future. At the same time, international cooperation on road traffic issues is a significant factor in addressing this difficult challenge more effectively, since the exchange of information and improved knowledge of the techniques applied will allow us to enrich the domestic databases of each country. This, in turn, will help those countries to identify better ways of resolving the regrettable collateral effects of traffic accidents.

These injuries increase the number of people with disabilities, which affect their lives and those of their families and place a severe strain on the health system at the national and international levels, not only because it places greater demands on specialized personnel, but also because it has a marked impact on the fragile budgets allocated by Governments for the prevention and treatment of human health problems.

Notwithstanding all this, it is gratifying to be able to state that in Ecuador there is already a kind of road-traffic culture, as I mentioned at the outset, which has been cultivated in primary and secondary schools, where students receive in their classrooms guidelines that teach them not only about traffic laws, but also about appropriate personal behaviour and the kind of first aid they could provide in the event of a vehicle collision. What was rare a few years ago is now common practice, such as the use of seat belts, which has saved countless lives on the Ecuador's highways and city streets, and the population's belief that the best way to avoid traffic accidents is to know and comply with the rules governing this activity and to take individual responsibility for operating a vehicle only when physically and psychologically capable of doing so.

The delegation of Ecuador wishes to place on record its satisfaction at the continued presence of this important item on the agenda of the United Nations. That is a guarantee of concerted international attention, because this forum is the most appropriate and secure way to seek solutions on road traffic issues, through understanding and cooperation in both the technical and the legal areas, because very often those who cause accidents do not accept responsibility for their lack of skill or incapacity. It is thus necessary to harmonize legislation so that the guilty can be brought to trial not only in the countries where they cause the accident, but also in those to which they have fled, thus preventing them from enjoying impunity for the deaths or physical disabilities they have caused.

Mr. Laggner (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We are happy to be here today to reaffirm our resolve to work together to combat this scourge to today's society: road traffic accidents. We commend the Secretary-General and the representative of the Government of Oman to the United Nations for their initiative in having brought the cause of combating the lack of road safety to the highest level. We also welcome the issuance of the excellent report on road traffic injury prevention, published jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and by the World Bank in connection with World Health Day, which, for the first time in its history, was devoted to road safety. The WHO is right in proclaiming loudly and clearly that road accidents are not inevitable.

We also hail the efforts of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which proclaimed the week of 5-11 April as Road Safety Week, devoted to the topic of aggressive driving behaviour. Throughout that period, all ECE members simultaneously embarked on campaigns under the slogan "Respect is safety" — respect for the rules of the road of course, but also, and above all, respect for others and respect for life.

Switzerland, which also experiences road safety problems and has set itself the goal of halving the number of people killed and seriously injured by 2010, shares the same goal as the European Union in that regard and intends to associate itself with its approach. In order to attain the envisaged goals, no matter what they may be, it is not enough to simply apply short-term specific measures. Such measures need to be integrated into a more general framework, which, in addition to technical undertakings, requires very strong political will. All actors concerned should be involved in the design, development and implementation of this policy.

We also need to develop a comprehensive and consistent approach to ensure that society and the economy treat road safety and mobility as equally important; that road users follow behaviour that is responsible and respectful of others; that vehicles are safe from a technical standpoint; that infrastructure is designed, maintained and used in such a way as to ensure the safety of its users; and, lastly, that victims be promptly rescued in keeping with the highest standards. These goals can be achieved through, among other things, training, education, a policy of monitoring and effective sanctions, incentive schemes and many other measures. However, they can also be achieved through cooperation and coordination at the international level to develop experience-sharing activities based, among other things, on the accumulated knowledge within the United Nations system, perhaps by means of worldwide conventions on traffic rules and road signposting.

Switzerland fully endorses the role of WHO as a coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system, in keeping with the provisions of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1. We would wish to see close coordination and cooperation established between WHO and the ECE, which have solid experience in this area. There is no doubt that the fact that these two organizations are based in Geneva will encourage synergy in this field.

Today we are taking an important step in the right direction, but let us not forget that accident prevention is a long-term endeavour that will yield fruit only over the long term. We should therefore further step up our efforts to achieve our aims. Switzerland is ready to do that.

Mr. Rastan (Malaysia): Malaysia would like once again to thank and commend the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, and particularly Ambassador Al-Hinai, for the extremely proactive and constructive role it has played in generating serious discussion on the question of the global road safety crisis. We see this plenary meeting today as a very important follow-up to the General Assembly discussion of last October, which led to the adoption of resolution 58/9, and to the ongoing work being carried out by various Governments, organizations and individuals in promoting a fresh and concerted approach to the problem of road traffic accidents and in dealing with its impact and ramifications.

We congratulate the World Health Organization (WHO) on devoting the theme for this year's World Health Day to road safety, thus drawing world attention to this emerging global menace. We also congratulate WHO and the World Bank for their excellent work on the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, which was issued in Paris in conjunction with World Health Day on 7 April 2004. We commend both organizations and the more than 100 experts who worked hard to produce the report for the very comprehensive attention given to all aspects of the problem and for the valuable recommendations made in the report. The report certainly provides a chilling reminder to all that "Road traffic injuries are a major but neglected public health challenge that requires concerted effort for effective and sustainable prevention".

The current figures and projections relating to death and injury caused by road traffic accidents are staggering. The report says that unless there is new commitment to prevention, these figures are projected to increase by about 65 per cent over the next 20 years. Similarly, the economic costs are extremely high and the social costs incalculable, in particular in terms of the trauma inflicted upon victims and their families.

It is clearly illustrated that the developing countries, where road traffic deaths and injuries are very high, possess limited capacity to implement the necessary measures in order to enhance road safety within their borders. There is certainly no dearth of commitment or effort to increase awareness within Government and society in those countries. There is an urgent need, no doubt, for greater international cooperation towards providing support and assistance to enable developing countries to improve their

capacity to deal with this problem. The building of partnerships involving all parties concerned within countries and on a global basis should be encouraged.

The Government of Malaysia pays serious attention to the problem of road traffic death and injury. As illustrated in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, Malaysia is taking serious efforts to improve road safety and reduce fatalities. As a rapidly developing country, Malaysia has seen a dramatic increase in vehicle ownership, averaging 8 per cent per annum, from 7.7 million in 1996 to 12.8 million vehicles in 2003. This translated into an increase in the number of road accidents from 189,109 cases in 1996 to 298,651 in 2003. At the same time, the number of fatalities resulting from road accidents decreased slightly from 6,304 cases in 1996 to 6,282 cases in 2003. However, the number of deaths per 10,000 vehicles decreased from 8.2 deaths in 1996 to 4.9 deaths per 10,000 in 2003. As illustrated in the *World report*, the National Road Safety Council of Malaysia has set a target of reducing fatalities to a ratio of less than three deaths per 10,000 registered vehicles by 2010.

The significant decrease in the number of deaths caused by road traffic accidents is attributed to the Government of Malaysia's long-standing and abiding commitment to addressing the problem of road safety among Malaysians. There has been a nationwide road traffic safety campaign and awareness programme since 1997 based on the concept of the four Es: enforcement, engineering, education and emergency services. It is our belief that if all 4Es are implemented in an integrated manner by all related Government agencies, the private sector, civil society and citizens, the target of a 30 per cent fatality reduction in road traffic accidents could be achieved.

The Road Engineering Association of Malaysia has also undertaken a comprehensive review of Malaysian road and highway standards in the light of the country's modern traffic requirements. Significant consideration has been given to the special needs of vulnerable road users, such as motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians, in particular school children. The implementation of the exclusive motorcycle-only lane policy and the switching on of daytime running lights has reduced the number of fatalities involving motorcyclists. Construction of pedestrian bridges and crossings across major roads and thoroughfares in city areas near schools and the deployment of school traffic wardens have also reduced the number of traffic accidents involving school children. The Ministry of Transport has adopted a "zero pothole" policy. Road surfaces are maintained and resurfaced with porous asphalt surfacing to prevent puddles forming on road surfaces and to guarantee improved riding comfort to road users. This has proven to reduce the number of road traffic accidents in Malaysia.

We are fully aware of the findings, cited on page 22 of the *World report*, that

> "Globally, road traffic injuries are a leading cause of death among young people who drive cars or ride motorized two-wheelers",

with death rates especially high among teenagers. By increasing the legal riding age from 16 to 18 years, Malaysia has significantly reduced rates of motorcycle crashes. To prevent death and injury among children, Malaysia is also encouraging the domestic development of helmets suitable for children.

Malaysia has been and continues to be an active participant at the regional and international levels in formulating strategies for the development and sustainability of road infrastructure and the institution of measures aimed at reducing the number of road traffic accidents and, consequently, the number of fatalities. In line with these efforts, Malaysia is involved in the Global Road Safety Partnership under the aegis of the World Bank, the World Road Association, the Land Transport and Safety Committee of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Sub-Working Group on Road Transport and Road Safety, as well as the Road Engineering Association of Asia and Australasia.

Road traffic accidents which cause death, injury and disability are of grave concern to us. Nobody is immune to their effects. In this regard, Governments, the United Nations and its relevant agencies, other international and regional organizations, civil society and individuals have an important role to play in galvanizing international and regional efforts to address and mitigate this problem. Malaysia is once again pleased to support the present effort in this Assembly and to co-sponsor the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Al-Jomae (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): With respect to draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, I should like first to thank the Government of Oman for

its role in sensitizing the entire world to the serious implications of road traffic. I also wish to thank the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank for their efforts in publishing the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* before us today.

A close reading of the *report* reveals the dimensions of the human catastrophe arising out of road accidents. However, the growing awareness of Governments and non-governmental organizations throughout the world of the gravity of this phenomenon represents a first step on the right path. We are reassured by the happy fact that we are learning how to deal with this problem.

As opposed to other scourges that are more difficult to address, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria — the costs of treatment of which are enormous — the issue before us today will not cost any more than the price of prevention at all levels of society. As was said at a symposium held in Oman in preparation for the conference,

> "the solution to this problem lies in the political will to ensure collective responsibility, to put an end to drunk driving and to enforce the use of safety belts".

Saudi Arabia is among those countries enjoying a network of roads planned on the basis of the most modern road safety criteria and speed-limit standards. We have adopted a number of measures, the most important of which include mandatory safety belts for drivers and passengers and systematic inspection and insurance of vehicles. The audio-visual media and the press are also working to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding, especially before official holidays, and its costs to the national economy. Rest areas have also been built to allow travellers to take a break en route. As well, symposiums are regularly held to raise awareness among young people, who are the most vulnerable group. All these activities have the objective of implementing the high-level plan of 2000, which aims to reduce the number of road accident fatalities by 30,000 by the year 2015.

We now have the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. It serves to summarize our activities and lay out what remains to be done. The report also contains recommendations and policies that we believe are good guidelines for mitigating the impact of traffic injuries.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the Observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Milton (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) welcomes the attention given in the General Assembly to the issue of global road safety. Road traffic injuries will kill perhaps 1.25 million people this year, and road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death worldwide for persons aged between 15 and 44. Much of that humanitarian disaster can be prevented.

Worldwide, the estimated cost is a staggering $518 billion — and, for many countries, between 2 and 3 per cent of gross domestic product. In transitional and developing countries, the cost of road deaths and injuries is estimated at double the value of all development assistance provided to those countries: a sobering statistic indeed.

The IFRC 1998 World Disasters Report included a chapter entitled "Must millions more die from traffic accidents?". The central message of that chapter is that everyone has a role to play in tackling the disaster. Just as our national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies work against communicable diseases, they are involved on a daily basis in prevention activities and in the provision of first aid and other support where road traffic injuries occur. As part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement's response to this issue, 25 European Red Cross societies have come together, with the support of the European Commission, to mount a road safety campaign in Europe in 2004. It targets children, under the slogan "You've only got one life, so take care".

In virtually all countries, the national Red Cross or Red Crescent society gives high priority to working for increased road safety. In Laos, for example, the very high death rate due to road accidents and its heavy impact on youth led the Red Cross society to open a special training programme aimed at young people so that they could begin peer education on road safety, traffic rules, basic first aid and general tips.

Similarly, the Jordan Red Crescent society has been motivated by the human and economic costs of road accidents. Action in Jordan plans for what the society describes as a vast mobilization campaign aimed at improving knowledge and changing attitudes.

The programme is one of the main priorities for the society in 2004, and the campaign will be launched on 4 May to link with World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, with a special message of support from His Majesty the King.

Another programme which deserves reference is the mock rescue exercise staged in Uganda on World First Aid Day, 2003. In that case, the Red Cross society, collaborating with the police, the fire brigade and the major city hospitals, and with the support of the Shell oil company, conducted a programme to test and improve disaster preparedness techniques and to ensure the availability of the medical support required in the event of a major emergency.

The International Federation notes those examples to show that in many countries the dialogue with government at all levels works well and effectively.

To be successful, local-level partnerships need multilateral support. But partnerships at the global level are also necessary. We are particularly pleased with the partnership developed between the International Federation and its member national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world, together with Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and, very important, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and private partners. The result is the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), which is hosted at the International Federation secretariat in Geneva. The GRSP is an active global partnership dedicated to the improvement of road safety in transitional and developing countries. It builds local partnerships among business, civil society and Governments in order to stimulate the sharing of information and experience, to bring forward policies and actions and to broker projects aimed at the effective and sustainable reduction of road deaths and injuries. The dissemination of knowledge and the expertise collected also make the programme relevant for Governments and civil society organizations around the world. Death and injury on the roads is a social and public health issue that all parts of society must address. Whether as Governments, business or civil society, we must work together.

We strongly support the recommendations contained in the World Report published last week by the World Health Organization and the World Bank. We also strongly support the call for the designation of a coordinating body to facilitate and coordinate these activities within the United Nations and with multilateral agencies. The IFRC and the GRSP stand ready to work with such a coordinating body. We also congratulate the World Health Organization on its decision to make road safety the theme for World Health Day this year. In our view, it is only with that kind of forefront advocacy that we will be able to get our message out effectively.

We will continue to give these issues very high priority. We look forward to working with all concerned parties to find effective ways of addressing the terrible loss of life and resources that the global road safety crisis has caused.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003, I now give the floor to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Bellamy (UNICEF): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is gratified by the General Assembly's decision to hold this important meeting in conjunction with World Health Day. It dramatizes the conclusion that the rising rate of road traffic injuries is in fact a public health crisis of far-reaching proportions — one that could undercut the child rights agenda reflected in the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Plan of Action approved two years ago at the General Assembly's landmark special session on children (resolution S-27/2, annex).

The World Health Organization–World Bank study, which was made public last week, shows that traffic accidents are well on their way to becoming the third leading cause of global death and disability by the year 2020. However, there is an element of hope in this rather gloomy picture: traffic injuries are both preventable and treatable.

The solutions involve a range of activities that can engage the entire United Nations system. They include such measures as improvements in road infrastructure, development of safer vehicles, stricter law enforcement, expanded health and hospital services, urban and environmental planning and programmes to promote public awareness and advocacy. Experts refer to the mix as the three "E"s: education, engineering and enforcement. UNICEF's role begins at the beginning, with education. For UNICEF, promoting road safety and injury prevention for children is a natural fit with our country

programmes of cooperation in everything from childhood development to adolescent support.

In Viet Nam, for example, childhood injury prevention activities have been integrated into the existing country programme, which includes development of a school curriculum on child safety and advocacy and mass-media efforts to raise awareness concerning the importance of road traffic safety. Practical information is also readily accessible in UNICEF's widely used "Facts for Life" booklet.

In that connection, I want to join others in taking this opportunity to commend the Sultanate of Oman and that country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations for their contribution to raising public awareness of the issue. Their dedication and hard work have been truly exceptional.

At the same time, UNICEF first Goodwill Ambassador to Oman, the rally driver Hamed Al Wahaibi, has been educating students in road safety from a professional perspective. And UNICEF Oman — our country office — in partnership with the Ministries of Education and Health and the Royal Oman Police, marked World Health Day by polling some 20,000 students concerning their views, ideas and suggestions on how to tackle the key causes of road traffic injuries and deaths. The polling was focused in the regions with the country's highest accident rates.

The key to preventing traffic fatalities and injuries will ultimately hinge on the emphatic exercise of political will at both national and international levels and the creation of partnerships to help catalyse new action with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society at every level. At the same time, we recognize the vast experience acquired over more than 50 years by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, notably through its international conventions.

Many countries are becoming engaged. Next week in Bangkok, UNICEF and the Alliance for Safe Children will convene a regional conference on child injury that we hope will draw new attention to the importance of strong preventive measures if the region is to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

We at UNICEF welcome the draft resolution on road traffic safety (A/58/L.60/Rev.1), including its call for the establishment of a United Nations focal point to coordinate activities and to exchange information on good practices. At the same time, we would urge that there be explicit recognition of children and — with their full lives ahead of them — of the disproportionate burden that they bear as a result of road traffic injuries.

We at UNICEF stand ready to support and work with national Governments to transform that and other commitments into action, secure in the knowledge that in taking steps to invest fully in children today, we will ensure the enduring right of every child, in every generation, to grow to adulthood in dignity, in health and in peace.

The Acting President: Members will recall that in its resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003, the General Assembly invited the President of the World Bank to address the Assembly. If there is no objection, and without setting a precedent, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to hear a statement by the Senior Vice-President of the World Bank?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Senior Vice-President of the World Bank.

Mr. Sarbib (World Bank): I thank the General Assembly for allowing me to speak, and I am honoured by this opportunity to address the Assembly on the global road safety crisis. I would like to thank in particular the Sultanate of Oman for its leadership on this issue.

Last week, as all know, the World Health Organization and the World Bank jointly issued the report the Assembly is discussing today. The document sets out our views. We have heard many references to it. But let me cite once again a few numbers that are unacceptable. Each day, 3,000 people die and 75,000 are injured on account of poor road safety; 80 per cent of those deaths occur in developing countries, which own only 20 per cent of the vehicles. And, as many have said before me, it costs them between 1 and 2 per cent of the gross domestic product — sometimes double what they receive in official development assistance.

Road safety is also a social equity issue, with road crashes having a disproportionate impact on the poor, who have limited access to post-crash emergency care and face costs and a loss of income that can easily push families into poverty. Global road fatalities worldwide are projected to increase by more than 65

per cent over the next 15 years. But that global number hides increasing differences. Fatalities are likely to increase by more than 80 per cent in low- and middle-income countries, but they will decrease by more than 30 per cent in high-income countries.

This is clearly a situation that calls for action. Quick, concerted and purposeful action can make a difference and reverse these unacceptable trends. The costs of inaction are too huge to ignore, and the proven benefits of sustained safety measures justify a united response by government, business and civil society. Governments need to act at the country level — we have heard of many such actions — and development agencies need to act at the global level.

The United Nations provides a unique platform for considering these issues, and our dialogue today and tomorrow will help map out important directions for the future. We must act with a sense of urgency and must focus on the results we want to achieve, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where needs are greatest.

But we can act with the confidence that we have proven prevention tools and with the knowledge that responsibility for deaths and injuries in the road transport system should no longer be placed on road users alone. Historically, a blame-the-victim approach to managing road safety performance has been actively promoted. But today, we more readily accept the fact that people make errors and that there are critical limits to human survival and recovery from injury. Our vision has shifted to the building and operation of a more forgiving road transport system able to absorb human errors in a way that does not result in death or long-term disability and loss of health.

Capacity-building will underpin our future road safety efforts, and success will be determined by the effectiveness of measures taken at three levels: building the capacity of countries to design and implement sustainable road safety strategies and measure their results; building the capacity across the World Bank Group to align and coordinate sector strategies and operations with results and country outcomes; and building the capacity of the World Bank Group and its development partners to collaborate more effectively and to harmonize efforts for greater road safety.

Our dialogue will continue beyond the next two days; no doubt it will take time to reach a consensus on the best way forward. But to focus our future deliberations, we should remind ourselves constantly of the benefits that countries could enjoy if we were indeed able to successfully scale up and accelerate measures to improve safety outcomes.

We have been modelling the relationship between traffic fatalities and economic growth in the regions we serve at the World Bank, and we have estimated the savings in lives and injuries that might be achieved over the next 15 years if further safety investments were made. For example, we estimate that more than 2.5 million lives could be saved if the projected rate of fatalities per vehicle could be reduced by a further 30 per cent by 2020. That appears to be a reasonable and achievable goal. Using the estimates of the ratios between deaths, hospitalized injuries and minor injuries presented in the *World report*, that would represent saving 37.5 million hospitalizations and approximately 175 million minor injuries.

Obviously, these are just working estimates and they may be understated. Greater reductions in fatalities per vehicle might be achievable, or we may even able to reach those goals more quickly. Some evidence also suggests that fatalities in the developing world might be significantly higher than those reported and adjusted for in our analysis, which would further push up our estimates of lives saved or injuries prevented. Maybe we could target savings of up to 3 to 4 million lives, 45 to 60 million hospitalizations and 210 to 280 million minor injuries over the next 15 years. We will work further on these estimates to quantify the results that could be achieved. When we relate them to each and every single life, it makes a big difference.

The essential point to make today is that every life is precious and that every life deserves to be protected on our roads. Even with conservative targets for improved safety performance, we can envisage saving many lives and preventing many more incapacitating injuries, alleviating human pain and suffering and, perhaps, preventing yet another source of imbalance between rich and poor nations.

These potentials are achievable. Gains in people's well-being should inspire all of us to greater global efforts. At the World Bank, we stand ready to play our part.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, entitled "Improving global road safety".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Costa Rica, Fiji, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Nepal, Nauru, Portugal, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Turkey.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 58/289).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 160?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.